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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3222

July 20, 2011

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

The Honorable Jeff Miller
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Filner
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
333 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Filner:

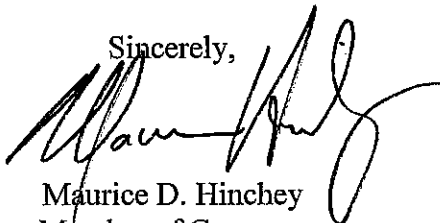
I respectfully request the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 1288, The World War II Mariner Service Act. This bill will expand the requirements for official documentation accepted by the Secretary of Homeland Security in evaluating the veteran status of our Merchant Marines.

As you may know, during World War II, the private citizens who made up the Merchant Marines served as part of an auxiliary force to the United States Navy. Current laws enable these seamen to apply for veteran status with the Department of Veterans Affairs but the documentation required for proving eligibility is extremely difficult or sometimes impossible to locate for many of these men and women. Many people who are entitled to benefits because of wartime service to their country are not receiving them because we have made the requirements for documentation too limited. It is our duty as elected representatives to do our utmost for these honorable citizens and this bill will make that possible.

As a Navy veteran, I have an official record that proves my military service but many of my compatriots who served in the Merchant Marine have no straightforward paperwork documenting their service and honorable discharge. Because the Merchant Marine did not keep such records for their sailors, I strongly believe that we need to expand the current list of approved documentation before it is too late for many to claim their veteran's benefits. As a cosponsor of H.R. 1288, I hope that you will expeditiously conduct a legislative hearing on this bill so that those Merchant Marines still living can receive the veterans' statuses that they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress

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